

Pelster House-Barn

HABS No. MO-244

On unmarked gravel road .1 of a mile  
south of Cedar Fork Road 2 miles east  
of intersection with County Road C  
Detmold Vicinity  
Franklin County  
Missouri

HABS  
MO,  
36-DET.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

HABS  
MO,  
36-DET.V,  
1-

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PELSTER HOUSE-BARN

HABS No. MO-244

Location: Cedar Fork Road, 2 miles east of intersection with County Route C, then .1 mile south on an unmarked gravel road, Detmold vicinity, Franklin County, Missouri.

Present Owner: Mr. Harry E. Panhorst, 2840 West Clay Street, St. Charles, Missouri.

Present Use: Hunting and fishing cabin.

Significance: The Pelster House-Barn was constructed for Wilhelm Pelster, a German immigrant, between 1860 and 1864. A single building housing both the farmer and his livestock, the house-barn is a traditional European type. The Pelster House-Barn may be the only example of this building type in the United States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1860-64. Wilhelm Pelster settled in Franklin County in the 1850s. He did not purchase the land that the house-barn is located on until 1856. According to Wilhelm Pelster's grandson, Mr. Alfred Pelster, the construction of the house-barn was interrupted by a Confederate raid during the Civil War. The only military action taking place in Franklin County during the Civil War was General Price's sweep through the area in 1864. All these factors indicate that construction was begun between 1860 and 1864.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Pelster House-Barn is constructed on the southwest corner of the southeast quarter of the southeast quarter of Section 5, Township 43, Range 3, Franklin County, Missouri. The following references to the title of this property are recorded in Franklin County, Missouri Deed Books and Probate Records.

1856      Warranty Deed      Henry Sifeman and Charlotte his wife to Wilhelm Pelster  
Date signed: March 27, 1856  
Book M    Page 379      Consideration: \$16.00

- 1951 Probate Records Gustave Pelster to Emma Pelster his wife and Alfred Pelster his son  
Date of G. Pelster's death September 15, 1951 Date of final settlement: 1951  
Book 15 Page 562 Probate Records
- 1955 Warranty Deed Alfred Pelster and Mathilda his wife to Maurice Barrett and Grace his wife  
Date signed: May 28, 1955  
Date filed: June 14, 1955  
Book 190 Page 147  
Consideration: \$100 and more
- 1961 Warranty Deed Maurice Barrett and Grace his wife to Harry E. Panhorst and Jean his wife  
Date signed: October 6, 1961  
Date filed: October 11, 1961  
Book 218 Page 114  
Consideration: \$100.00 and more

4. Original plans, construction, etc.: No original plans, early views, or written accounts of the construction of the Pelster House-Barn have been located. A photograph of the Gustave Pelster family in front of the house porch taken around 1917 is owned by Mr. Alfred Pelster. Physical evidence indicates that the house is much as it was originally.
5. Alterations and additions: The porch originally was supported by simple chamfered posts and had a railing. The present turned posts are an addition made after 1917. The original porch is visible in the 1917 photograph of the Gustave Pelster family.

The northern end of the barn on the upper levels has been altered extensively to allow the addition of a hay track. The cross braces of the rafters were cut out and used as supports for the purlins added to stabilize the weakened roof. The hay track is suspended below the ridge of the roof. The heavy timbering supporting a third level loft was removed, creating a large open space from the second floor hay loft up to the roof. Only the longitudinal timbers remain. The gable door was probably added for the track.

The original wooden shingles of the roof are now covered with corrugated sheet metal. This alteration occurred before 1917, since the new roofing is visible in the photograph of the Gustave Pelster family.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Wilhelm Pelster, a German immigrant, settled in Franklin County with his parents in 1856. Unlike most immigrants, he retained the German custom of the house-barn. This is even more unusual, since the house-barn is the second house he built on his property. During the Civil War, Pelster was forced to flee in advance of raiding Confederate troops to avoid being shot or pressed into service. At one time, Wilhelm Pelster was one of the largest land holders in the County. His descendants are still living in the area.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

1. Deeds: Office of the County Recorder, Franklin County Courthouse, on the Square, Union, Missouri.
2. Probate records: Office of the Probate Clerk, across from the Franklin County Courthouse, Union, Missouri.
3. Interview: Mr. Alfred Pelster, August 22, 1975, Civil War story, geneology.

b. Secondary and published sources:

History of Franklin, Jefferson, Washington, Crawford and Gasconade Counties, (Goodspeed Publishing Company. Chicago, Ill.: 1888)

Prepared by: Nanette M. Linderer  
Project Historian  
Summer 1975

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A rectangular, three story half-timbered structure, built in the mid-Missouri vernacular of the period.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 52'10" x 60'4½".
2. Foundations: 24" thick continuous limestone ashlar walls.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Typical German Fachwerkbau construction. Heavy wooden sills rest upon the foundation walls, and columns bear on them. Intermediate beams are set along the wall to brace the columns and frame windows and doors, and the end panels are braced diagonally. Girts are notched into the top beam, and the rafters are pegged to a sill which rests on the girts. White oak timbers (8" square on the first floor; 5" square on the second) form the framing, with limestone nogging inlaid in many of the panels. Unpainted clapboards cover the exterior of the walls.

4. Structural system: Half-timber perimeter walls sit on continuous foundation walls. Rough cut 8" square beams spaced 48" on center, running east-to-west form the floor structure for the loft. These bear upon two primary beams (8 ½" x 10 ½") which are supported by interior columns and which divide the barn into three equal spaces. The columns are sway braced in the north-south direction. The roof structure has been altered in the north half to accommodate the addition of a hay rail mounted at the ridge. The girts have been sawed off, and purlins and queen posts have been installed.
  5. Porches: A porch runs the length of the house section on the east side of the building.
  6. Chimneys: One end chimney (stuccoed brick) at the ridge on the south side.
  7. Openings:
    - a. Doors and doorways: Front (east) door to the house section is four panel with mortise passage locksets and white porcelain knobs. The large double wagon doors on the east side are beaded vertical plank doors with double Z-braces, wrought iron strap hinges and a wooden latch.
    - b. Windows: A variety of double hung and casement windows and unglazed openings - wooden casings and sashes throughout.
  8. Roof:
    - a. Shape, covering: Steeply pitched gable roof. Corrugated metal sheets cover the wooden shingles.
    - b. Dormers: The walls of the wagon entrance extend above the eave of the main roof, forming a gabled wall dormer.
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans:
    - a. Basement: A central passageway with exterior access extends north-south between a succession of stalls and storage bins.
    - b. First floor: The building is divided into two basic sections - the barn section occupies the northern two-thirds of the building, and the house section occupies the remainder. Entrance to the barn is gained through a pair of wagon doors on the east wall which open into a central 1 ½ story space. To the north and west of this space lie a number of single story stalls and storage chambers. The house portion is entered through a door on the east wall. This leads into a room which leads into another room.

- c. Second and third floors: The low-ceilinged (6' 9") second story of the house section is entered by a stair on the south wall of the barn. The two spaces in the second floor of the house are arranged like those on the first floor. The loft area of the barn is divided into two sections - a mezzanine loft covers the northern one third of the building, while an upper loft covers the remainder of the barn section and the entire house section.
  2. Stairways: A single enclosed wooden stairway on the south wall of the barn section connects the second story of the house with the first. The original stairway to the basement has been removed. Ladders connect the lofts with the main floor of the barn.
  3. Flooring: Tongue-and-groove planks form the floors of the main floor of the barn and both stories of the house; the loft of the barn has a board-on-board floor.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings of the barn are the exposed building framing and nogging. Interior walls of the house are lath-and-plaster on wooden stud frames; exterior walls of the house are plastered stone. All walls in the house are painted. The ceiling of the first floor of the house is beaded board; there is no finished ceiling on the second floor.
  5. Doorways and doors: First floor doors in the house are four panel; second floor doors are beaded vertical plank. There are no interior doors in the barn section of the building.
  6. Decorative features: The doors are fitted with either cast iron rim-locks or mortise passage locksets.
  7. Lighting fixtures: The house has contemporary electrical lighting on the first floor; the remainder of the building is unlighted.
  8. Heating: The house is heated by a cast iron stove in each room. The barn is unheated.
- D. Site:
1. General setting: The barn sits in an undisturbed rural setting, with the front elevation facing east.
  2. Outbuildings: None.

Prepared by: Clayton B. Fraser  
Project Supervisor  
Summer 1975

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Hermann, Missouri, project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey, under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, with cooperation of Historic Hermann, Incorporated. Recordings were carried out during the summer of 1975 by Clayton B. Fraser (HABS Washington Office), Project Supervisor; Nanette M. Linderer (University of Missouri at Columbia), Project Historian; and Student Architects Edward C. Freeman (Arizona State University), Jean C. Parker (Columbia University), and Donnie G. Seale (University of Florida). The photographs were taken in April and May 1983, by HABS/HAER Photographer Jet Lowe.